

Matthew Boedy is an associate professor of rhetoric and composition at the University of North Georgia. He works in the English department teaching first-year writing and professional writing courses. At UNG he has served as the vice-president of the campus chapter of the AAUP, helping found the chapter in 2017.

He has served as the president of the Georgia conference of the AAUP since February 2020 and as the conference's committee A chairperson since before that. He was recently re-elected as president. In that role, this past September he led a week-long, statewide protest against the state university system's decision to drop its mask mandate. He also led the conference's efforts against the move to gut tenure by the system's Board of Regents. He was the conference's spokesman in its efforts to stop the selection of former governor and US agriculture secretary Sonny Perdue as the system's new chancellor. He has been documenting the Covid-19 case count on all Georgia higher education campuses since the pandemic began. And he is a regular contributor to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution's education blog.

Among his recent publications are a chapter about the gun rhetoric of Turning Point USA and a research article about the first ten years of TPUSA for Political Research Associates. He and others have been targeted by TPUSA by being named to its "professor watchlist." He has written extensively on TPUSA on many platforms.

He is a former journalist and high school teacher. He lives in Gainesville, Georgia with his wife and two-year old daughter Nora.

I have been involved with the AAUP since 2016, when the president of my state conference contacted me after reading an op-ed I wrote. As a young assistant professor, I had not heard of the AAUP before then.

My early involvement in the state conference energized me to found a chapter at my university. When I was targeted by a then-unknown conservative group for that very same op-ed, I learned quickly the value of the AAUP's long history fighting for academic freedom. And that quickly turned to practice as I volunteered to be the chairperson of our state's Committee A.

From there, my AAUP experience snowballed into a conference presidency, Covid, mask mandate protests, tenure fights, chancellor politics, and now legislative gag orders. All these issues have strengthened my skills in writing and argument but also built new skills in faculty organizing, community building, and leadership. It has been a whirlwind since being elected president two weeks before the world changed.

And our nation has changed. The targeting of higher education by conservative groups has become more organized, better funded, and intensely personal. Legislative fights have ballooned. Tenure is under attack. And public opinion about all of us has tanked.

More than a decade ago, in 2011, the AAUP national council passed a resolution about the AAUP's priorities. It wanted to expand its advocacy chapters and conferences by providing new and additional resources for organizing and offering AAUP staff and leadership at the national level to assist when chapters and states report attacks on faculty rights. My state of Georgia has benefitted from that effort in the last year. The national AAUP has given us money, organizers, and its most powerful weapon, censure. I applaud all that.

I am running for AAUP national council to ensure these efforts continue and expand beyond Georgia. Tennessee and Texas were mentioned in that 2011 priority statement. Those two states face dire threats like Georgia. Other states like South Carolina continue to beat back similar threats.

As a state conference president I have helped organize our AAUP region to work together. We have worked to lobby the federal government for a vaccine mandate, for example. I am running to represent Region 2 to make sure this collaboration continues and expands.

The AAUP is vital to the future of higher education. I am running for national council to make sure the future of AAUP remains strong for all states.